Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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EDITORIAL

With this issue we complete our second year's existence, and send our heartfelt thanks to our readers for their friendly, ungrudging support. Our numbers are growing all the time, slowly but surely, and Robbie Lowe has given us a kindly mention; this, and the continued approval of our President, John Fosbery, is most encouraging. We look forward to our third year with less trepidation!

We draw our readers' attention to three important dates in the Spanish Main calendar:-

SATURDAY 3rd JULY. 10 a.m. to 4p.m. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and AUCTION.

SATURDAY 18th SEPTEMBER. PRESIDENT'S DAY.

SATURDAY 23rd OCTOBER. CENTRAL AMERICAN GROUP MEETING. This will include displays of Nicaragua (Mike Birks), Honduras (George Richardson) and Salvador (Bernard Davies). We would welcome volunteers to show some Costa Rica and Guatemala. PLEASE BOOK THIS DATE IN YOUR DIARY, AND DO YOUR UTMOST TO BE PRESENT. In our friendly competition with the Chile group, they are so far winning all ends up for attendance at Group meetings. Let's show them, this time!

All these meetings are at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, near Marble Arch, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Remember that if you cannot manage the whole of the time, we are much happier to see you for some part of it than not to see you at all.

The Editor's plea for "definitions" of postal history has produced an interesting response which we hope will lead to further debate resulting in the casting of some light on the dark corners of this currently confused issue. We append in full Ron Belton's useful letter, and thank L N Williams for a longer article which (hopefully) will find its way into MAINSHEET, and Dr Derek Pocock for extracts from the present International Federation rules, which we shall use for comment at a later stage.

Moordown
Bournemouth Dorset

Dear Bernard

Many thanks for the Central American Newsletter, and I note you invite definitions of the term "Postal History". As prior to my retirement I was for some years with Robson Lowe, who largely pioneered postal history, you might be interested in my views on the subject.

With respect to the judges to whom you refer I think they were wrong. In my view postal history is anything to do with the development of the mails, and "postal markings" do not necessarily have anything to do with it. Any used stamp has a postal mark. On the other hand early postal documents for example have not, but they are essentially part of the subject.

If your collection consists of Nicaraguan bisects the use of which was sanctioned by the Post Office owing to a shortage of certain values this is to my mind postal history. The history behind such use could in itself be interesting. Who knows what happened in those days? Wreck of the ship carrying new supplies? Pirates? A sudden change in the postal rates which caught the Post Office napping? Industrial troubles

over/

at the printers or shortage of suitable paper? The list is endless.

The whole essence of collecting is individuality, which is just as well, and we must have different opinions, but this fact must also be borne in mind by people taking on the responsibility of judging.

Yours sincerely

Ron Belton

Bernard Jarvis

AN "UNKNOWN" FANCY CANCELLATION OF GUATEMALA by "QUETZAL"

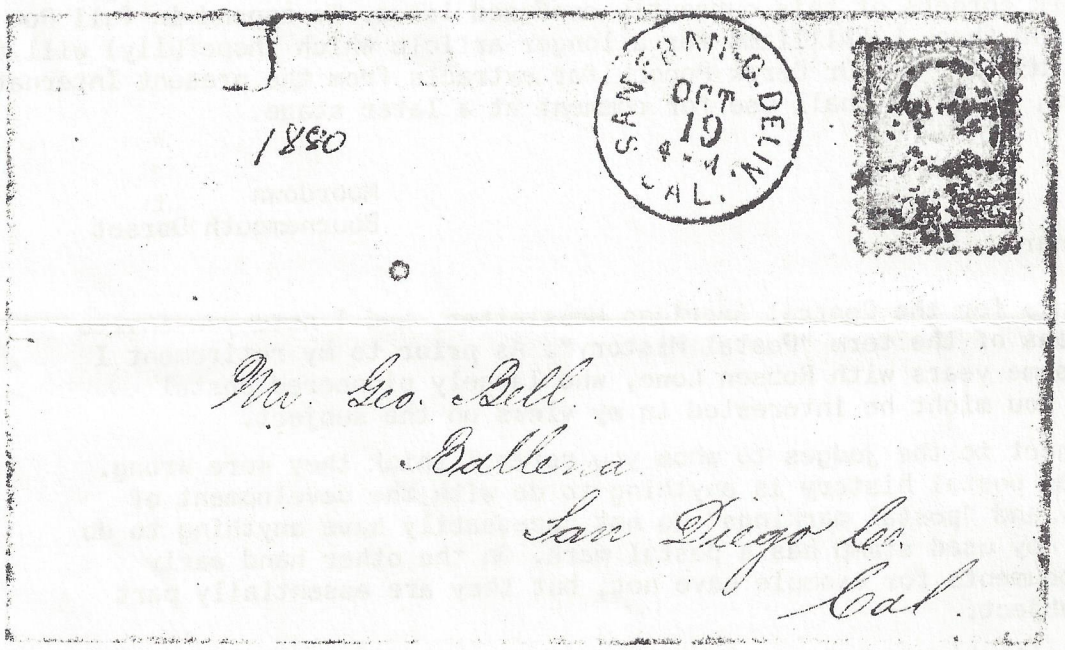
With reference to the article under the above heading in the Central American Newsletter issue No 7 of March 1982, I can now elucidate this cork strike.

As can be noticed from the photo kindly supplied by Mr Derek Bolton of "London Stamp Exchange Ltd.", himself an avid collector of San Francisco postal history material, a similar cancel was in use there around 1880.

This is not a duplex and the fancy strike was probably from a canceller made of box-wood or metal.

Undoubtedly the cork fancy cancellation as illustrated in the previous issue was applied in San Francisco.

If you have further proof please contact the Editor.



NICARAGUAN NOTES by DOUGLAS BAYLISS

In a small batch of Nicaraguan postal stationery I bought recently, was an 1878 card H&G 1, with an experimental duplex cancel of Managua. I was pleased to get this as I had no example of this type of cancel on cover; and even more pleased to find that not only the despatch mark of Managua was an early date, but also the arrival mark of Masaya was a late use in black of the earlier dc with bridge.

Details are:- MANAGUA Experimental duplex in violet with 3-line date JUL/25/1886, Heinze type B, illustration 31.
He records this mark for Managua AUG/21/1886.

MASAYA Double circle with bridge in black 25 JULI 86, Heinze illustration 12.

References are to Heinze's "Cancellations on the Early Stamps of Nicaragua".

MAIL CARRIED VIA LAKE MANAGUA

Between 1884 and 1903, when the railway connection between Momotombo Junction and Managua was opened, there was a steamer service across Lake Managua between Momotombo and Managua.

Letters were carried by this route, and I have seen but do not possess covers with the handstamp 'Buzon Vapor'. This I am fairly certain was applied to letters on arrival at Managua. Momotombo, a small office, may not have been issued with a similar mark, and I have often wondered how many postmarks of this place were used on letters coming across the lake from Managua and how to identify these.

Recently I noticed among my Nicaragua covers a 5c Postal Stationery envelope of 1894 addressed to Leon with a Momotombo duplex cancel of the period and with a sender's handstamp on the backflap 'Alberto Peter y Cia/Managua/21 Set.1894'. Instead of this usual month/day/year, the date portion of the duplex has 'SET 23 REC^{O}'. Heinze's monograph on the cancellations of Nicaragua does not mention this variant, and I suggest that Momotombo had a separate canceller for transit purposes.

Readers' comments are invited.

THE STEAMER "VICTORIA"

In the Nicaraguan gazeteer given in issue No 7 I was particularly interested by the entry for MOYOGALPA. This was described as a port on the island of Ometepe, visited three times monthly by the steamer "Victoria".

Heinze's "Early Cancellations of Nicaragua" states that the "Victoria", which ran on Lake Nicaragua, had an early type of double-circle canceller with three-line date and describes a cover of 1893 that went to New York via San Juan del Norte. Was this, one wonders, landed at a lakeside town then sent overland to San Juan del Norte, or did the steamer take it down the Rio San Juan? Perhaps some member knows the route followed by the "victoria" and it is even possible that a time-table will turn up. The obvious transit point for the east coast is San Carlos, while letters going by the West Coast route via Corinto would most likely be landed at Granada, or possibly San Jorge.

Although I have no cover cancelled on board, a recent purchase included a 1907 10c Waterlow with straightline 'Buzon Victoria' in violet. This suggests that letters collected from the steamer box received this as a transit mark at one of the places mentioned.

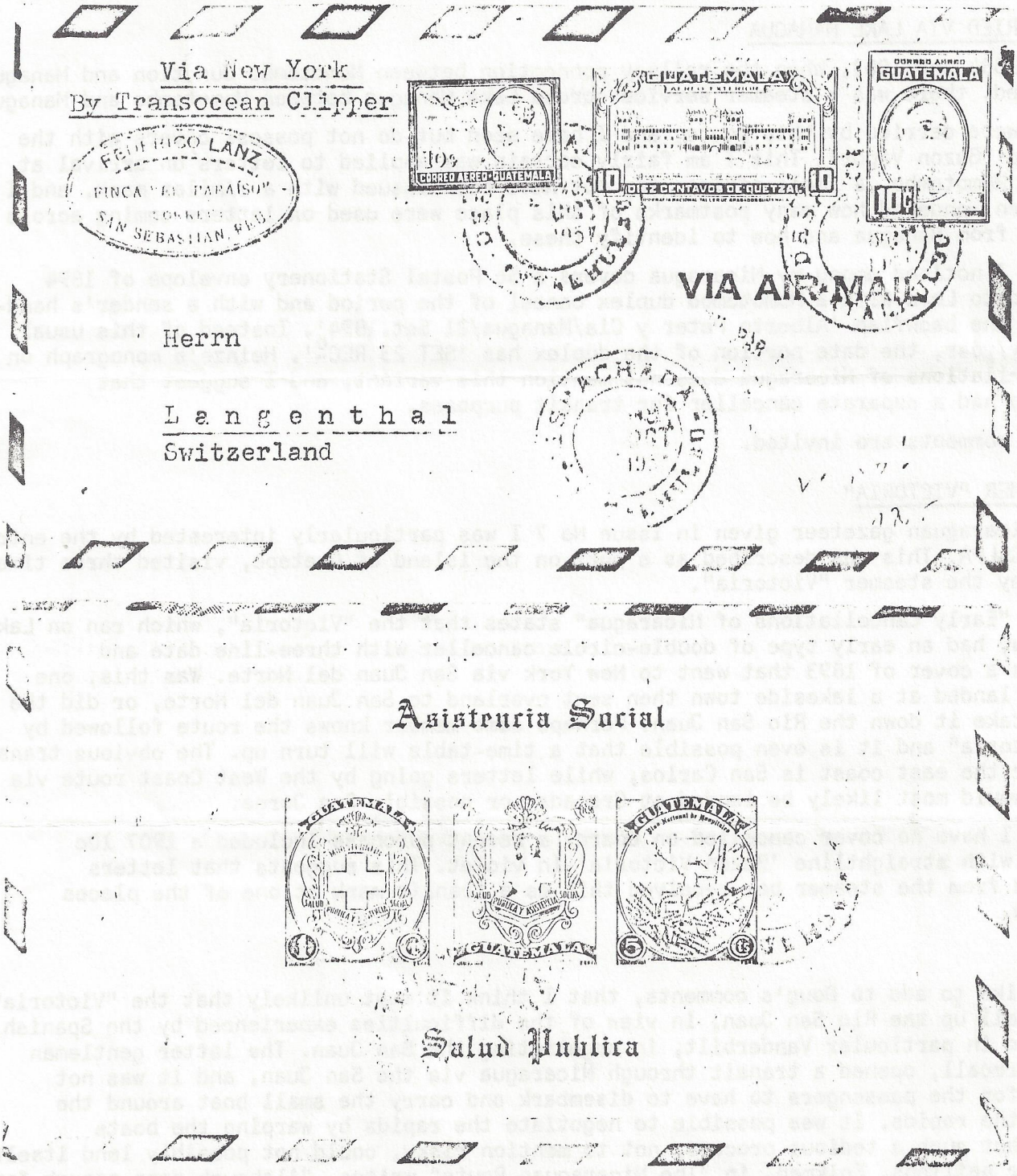
(I would like to add to Doug's comments, that I think it most unlikely that the "Victoria" carried mail up the Rio San Juan, in view of the difficulties experienced by the Spanish, Nelson and in particular Vanderbilt, in negotiating the San Juan. The latter gentleman you will recall, opened a transit through Nicaragua via the San Juan, and it was not uncommon for the passengers to have to disembark and carry the small boat around the worst of the rapids. It was possible to negotiate the rapids by warping the boats upriver, but such a tedious process, not to mention risky, could not possibly lend itself to regular sailings. Folkman, in "The Nicaraguan Route" writes, "Although deep enough for the navigation of small steamers throughout most of its length, a series of rapids prevented clear passage."- MPB)

GUATEMALA: AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY by "QUETZAL"

It is the dream of every collector to discover a scarce or rare item for the proverbial "song", and occasionally such a dream comes true.

In the case described below the "find" was quite inadvertent and the cover in question had been lying in a shoebox filled to the brim with cheaper and medium-priced items for over 6 months before its real status was ascertained.

As can be seen from the photo the cover was sent from Retalhuleu to Switzerland on the 28th October 1951 and bears on the front 3 x 10c air stamps (SG 445, 450 and 464) which appears to be the proper air surcharge at that time for Europe, in addition to 5c regular postage, giving a total of 35 centavos.



The reverse shows the Souvenir Sheet for the "Social Assistance and Public Health" issue of 1950-51 (SG MS510).

So far so good, and were it not for the fact that the writer one fine day took the trouble to browse through Vol 2 of the Guatemala Handbook and read the story on pages 505 to 509 concerning the "Social Assistance and Public Health" issue, this cover would still be slumbering in the said shoebox.

Briefly, the stamps and Souvenir Sheet (the latter both perforated and imperforate were lithographed by the Eureka Speciality Printing Company of Scranton, U.S.A.. At a certain stage it was noticed that the map on the 5c stamps showed the frontier of British Honduras (now Belize) as well as the wording "British Honduras". These should never have been shown since Guatemala claimed Belize as part of her territory. A new printing had to be made quickly without the frontier and the wording "British Honduras". The 5c stamps were held back (later to appear overprinted "Belize es Nuestro" = Belize belongs to us) and the Souvenir Sheets were cut to remove the 5 centavos.

However, some Souvenir Sheets were erroneously distributed to Post Offices and as the photo clearly indicates THIS IS ONE OF THEM, IMPERFORATE. In fact, it may well be the only one known on cover.

It would seem that neither the sender nor the addressee in Switzerland was aware of this; perhaps neither of them were collectors. And what about the dealer who sold this cover to the writer?

Certainly, there must be a moral in this story: always check your acquisitions, even 6 months after purchase ....

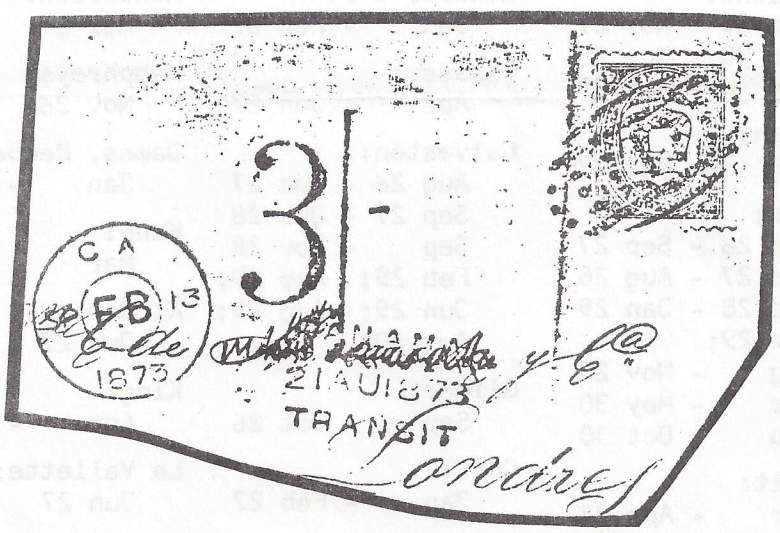
In conclusion my thanks go to the sender and the addressee and last but not least to the Swiss dealer from whom the cover was eventually purchased for around frs. 10.--. Bless their ignorance'

1873 LITHOGRAPHED ISSUE - EARLIEST KNOWN DATE?

The handbook, Volume 1, page 59 gives the earliest known dates as follows:-

April 24, 1874 for the 4 reales, and
December 1874 for the 1 peso

As the photo - taken from the sales list of a well-known stamp company clearly shows, the Panama transit strike is dated 21 August 1873, London Foreign Branch arrival mark Sept. 13, 1873. The cover was sent from Guatemala City (hence the large numeral "1") and the faint oval cancel in blue to the left of the stamp - not visible in the picture - , shows the date August 6, 1873 and this appears now to be the earliest recorded date. Does anybody know of an earlier one?



U.S. NAVAL DEPLOYMENT DURING THE TWO NICARAGUAN CAMPAIGNS by Michael P Birks

A recent purchase of covers purporting to be from U.S. ships stationed in Nicaraguan waters, prompted me to try to verify that these ships were involved in the Nicaraguan campaigns, and that the dates were correct. The problem is that physical presence in an area did not qualify for Nicaraguan service recognition; a ship had to be actually participating in operations or directly supporting them to qualify for the Second Nicaraguan Campaign Ribbon. The question has been raised in connection with troop transports which visited the port of Corinto several times to discharge and embark passengers, but were not pronounced eligible for a campaign ribbon.

The following extracts from Naval reports should aid the identification of covers involved with the Nicaraguan campaigns.

The First Nicaraguan Campaign

This medal was awarded to officers and enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps who served in Nicaragua or on board any of the following ships between the dates of 29th July 1912 and 14th November 1912.

Annapolis	California[1]	Cleveland	Colorado[1]
Denver	Glacier	Maryland[1,2]	Tacoma

[1]armoured cruisers [2]not the 'Maryland' involved in the second campaign

The dates given can only be approximate in philatelic terms, as they are the dates that the marines were on Nicaraguan soil. Whilst some marines and sailors were left on board, the majority of covers should emanate from dates outside those given, when the marines were on board ship. It is believed that no land based post offices were established in Nicaragua until 1922, and so all mail probably went via the ships. That which went in the Nicaraguan post would have Nicaraguan stamps, and is probably indistinguishable from any ordinary commercial cover, should such mail exist. The difficulty is in establishing 'first' and 'last' days of eligibility, and dates given can only be a rough guide. For that reason, dates of the second campaign have been reduced to months only, as greater accuracy is pointless. It is also possible that, where the intervals are brief, the vessels remained anchored in Nicaraguan waters, and did not return to the United States. Only a detailed search of the ships' logs could give precise dates for 'first' and 'last' days of eligibility.

The Second Nicaraguan Campaign

This medal was awarded to officers and enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps who served in Nicaragua between 26th August 1926 and 2nd January 1933. The details of the vessel deployment are given below:-

Asheville:
Aug 29: Dec29:
Feb 30:
Jan - Jun 31

Bainbridge:
Apr - Jun 27

Barker:
Jan 27

Barry:
Dec 26 - Jan 27

Borie:
Jan - Mar 27

Brooks:
Dec 26

Cincinnati:
Jan 27

Cleveland:
Dec 25 - Nov 27
Mar 28 - Nov 28
May - Aug 29

Coghlan:
Feb - Mar 27

Denver:
Sep 26 - Sep 27
Dec 27 - Aug 28
Dec 28 - Jan 29
Apr 29;
Aug - Nov 29
Mar - May 30
Sep - Oct 30

Detroit:
Mar - Apr 27

Edwards J D:
Jan - Feb 27

Flusser:
Apr - Jun 27

Galveston:
Aug 26 - Jun 27
Sep 27 - Jun 28
Sep - Nov 28
Feb 29; Apr 29;
Jun 29; Aug 29;
Apr 30;

Gilmer:
Sep - Oct 26

Goff:
Jan - Feb 27

Hatfield:
Feb - Mar 27

Henderson:
Mar 27

Humphreys:
Nov 26

James, Reuben:
Jan - Mar 27

Kane:
Mar - Apr 27

Kidder:
Jun 27

King:
Apr - Jun 27

La Vallette:
Jun 27

Lawrence:
Feb - Mar 27

Lichfield:
Jun - Jul 27

Marblehead:
Jan 27

Marcus:
Aug 27

McFarland:
Mar - Apr 27

Melvin:
Jan - Jul 27

Memphis: (lt cruiser)
Oct - Nov 32

Mervine:
Jun - Jul 27

Milwaukee:(lt crser)
Jan - Jun 27

Mullany:
Jul - Aug 27

Osborne:
Jan 27

Overton:
Aug - Sep 32

Paulding, J K:
Nov 26
Mar - Apr 27

Philip:
Jan 31 - Feb 32
Apr 32

Preston:
Apr - Jun 27

Quail:
Dec 26 - Feb 27

Raleigh:
Feb - Mar 27

Reid:
Apr - Jun 27

Rochester:
Aug 26 - Feb 27
Jul - Aug 27
Oct - Nov 27
Jan 28 - Feb 29
Jul 29
Nov - Dec 29
Oct - Nov 30
Apr 31

Sacramento:
Mar 29; Jun 29;
Sep 29; Mar 30;
Jan 31;
Apr - May 31
Aug - Sep 31

Selfridge:
Jun - Jul 28

Shirk:
Jul 27

Sloat:
Jun - Aug 28

Smith, Robert:
Jun - Aug 28

Sturtevant:
Sept - Oct 32

Thompson, Smith;
Sep - Nov 26
Jan 27

Tracy:
Nov - Dec 26
Mar - Apr 27

Trenton: (light cruiser)
Apr - May 27

Tulsa: (gunboat)
Aug - Dec 26
Mar 27 - Mar 28
Jun 28 - Dec 28

Whipple:
Nov - Dec 26
Mar - Apr 27

Wickes:
Jan - Feb 32

Williamson:
Jan - Feb 27

Wood:
Jun - Jul 27

Yarborough:
Jun - Jul 27

Because certain vessels did not qualify for recognition, not being directly involved, the following extracts from annual Naval reports will add to the list of vessels which qualify philatelically.

July 1st 1927 (i.e. July 1926 - June 1927)

"The special service squadron has been engaged ... in Central America. During this period the principal centre of activity has been Nicaragua where civil war raged until the latter part of May 1927.

The first armed clash ... necessitaed the landing of naval forces in Bluefields ... From this place the war gradually spread along the east coast ... Later the scene of activities was transferred largely to the western and more populous section of the country. ... a strong force was established in the capital ..."

"As the danger points moved inland it became advisable to use marines for this duty. A marine expeditionary force, comprising about 3,000 officers and men, was sent for this service, being transported principally by the U.S.S. 'Argonne', 'Henderson', 'Aroostook', 'Altair' and 'Medusa'."

"The cargo vessels, 'Vega' and 'Sirius', operated practically at capacity between east and west coast ports, also supplying vessels on duty in Nicaragua ... They also carried officers and enlisted men as passengers ..."

July 1st 1928

"At the present time we have approximately 4,000 marines, 21 planes, and a batallion of 264 naval personnel (in Nicaragua)."

"The cargo vessels 'Vega' and 'Sirius' have ... also carried supplies for the marine forces in Nicaragua, stopping at Nicaraguan ports on eastbound and westbound voyages."

July 1st 1929

"The 'Medusa' and 'Bridge' were utilized in July 1928, to transport marines to Nicaragua, and again in January 1929 the 'Medusa', en route to the Canal Zone, evacuated Battle Fleet marines from Nicaragua."

"Rear Admiral E H Campbell, United States Navy, relieved Rear Admiral David F Sellers, United States Navy, as commander special service squadron on May 9, 1929.

The 'Rochester', flagship of Rear Admiral David F Sellers, ... met the 'Maryland' at Corinto, Nicaragua, on the occasion of President-elect Hoover's visit to that place ..."

"The U.S.S. 'Tulsa' was ... replaced by the U.S.S. 'Sacramento'."

"... it was necessary to use combatant vessels and vessels of the fleet base force to transport forces to Nicaragua. This emplyment was in addition to the emplyment of the 'Bridge', 'Nitro' and 'Vega' for transportation purposes." (The 'Nitro' as its name suggests was a munitions carrying vessel).

July 1st 1930

"From a total of 3,094 on July 1st 1929, the (second) brigade (of marines) was reduced to 2,021 by October 1. Further reductions ... brought the total strength down to 1,061 ..."

"The bulk of the Second Brigade is now concentrated in Managua, Matagalpa, and Ocotal, ..."

"The transports 'Henderson' and 'Chaumont' ... were used in the movement of marines to and from Nicaragua."

"The cargo carriers 'Vega' and 'Sirius' ... have also carried supplies for the Marine forces in Nicaragua, stopping at Nicaraguan ports on eastbound and westbound voyages."

July 1st 1931

"Rear Admiral E H Campbell remained in command ... until December 23, 1930. Rear Admiral Arthur Sinclair Smith assumed command ... on January 23, 1931, and remained in command during the rest of the year.

The 'Denver' operated with the Special Service Squadron until November 20, 1930 ..."

"The squadron is now composed of only three ships, 'Rochester', 'Sacramento' and 'Asheville'.

During the Nicaraguan earthquake the 'Rochester' transported supplies to Corinto and stood by to render other assistance."

"... the 'Memphis','Langley', 'Dupont', and 'Schenck', arrived at Puerto Cabezas between April 17 and 22.

On April 19 the 'Memphis' departed from Puerto Cabezas for Honduras ..."

"... between April 25 and May 1 1931, the 'Langley', 'Dupont' and 'Schenck' were withdrawn ... On May 6 the 'Rochester' departed and, by June 21, 1931, there were no vessels of the United States Navy in eastern Nicaraguan waters."

"... landing parties of bluejackets and marines from the 'Memphis' and 'Asheville' were sent ashore in Puerto Cabezas from April 15 to April 23. The marine detachment of the 'Sacramento' was ashore in Bluefields April 18-28."

"The aircraft carrier 'Lexington' and the hospital ship 'Relief', were ordered to Nicaragua ... Upon arrival at Corinto, the 'Relief' landed a large quatity of medical supplies ..."

"The cargo carriers 'Vega' and 'Sirius' ...have also carried supplies for the Marine forces in Nicaragua, stopping at Nicaraguan ports on eastbound and westbound voyages."

July 1st 1932

ditto for 'Vega' and 'Sirius'

July 1st 1931

"A new President of Nicaragua was inaugurated on January 1, 1933, and on the following day all naval forces were withdrawn from Nicaragua."

One ship not so far mentioned was the U.S.S.'Richmond'. The "Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships" states that "On April 14, 1928, she sailed eastward and less than three months later departed San Pedro, Calif., for Corinto, Nicaragua, with a Navy Batallion embarked. On 25 July she retransited the Panama Canal and for the next six years operated off the New England and mid-Atlantic coasts and in the Caribbean ..."

I do not suggest these notes are exhaustive, but I believe they provide an excellent basis for further study.

The information on the three previous pages was extracted from copious photocopies, for which I am greatly indebted to Richard T Speer, of the Ships' Histories Branch at the Naval Historical Centre in Washington D.C., who really put himself out to obtain the information I requested (and returned the 5 dollar bill I sent him in appreciation).

In conclusion I would add, that I have information regading marine activity, and the deployment of U.S. ships off the coast of Mexico. If you are interested in this, please write to the Editor, and if requested, I will repeat this excercise for the Mexican Service Medal.

CAUSERIE

801 Nils Farnström thinks he has a unique Guatemala item. Described in the Guatemala handbook as DIP IA of the first issue, ex Albrecht and probably ex Frigstad, it is the 1c die proof of which the handbook says that it is a very curious combination of mechanical and handwork. An erasure has been made in the upper left corner of the card and the words "This proof touched to be sent F.J." written in ink over the place. As Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferte, a French engraver commonly known as simply Ferdinand Joubert was working for De La Rue at the time, the evidence seems overwhelming that Joubert engraved the die for Hulot.

802 Dr Stanley Wood seeks enlightenment on some discrepancies in the listing of the 1900 surcharges of El Salvador. He wonders whether there was good reason for Leavy's failing to list the stamps numbered in Gibbons SG405, 408, 415 and 417, and he notes that according to Leavy, SG400, 402, 404, 409 and 414 belong to the second setting group whereas he (and I - B.D.) have copies of these with the first setting (9mm) spacing.

803 Gerard Marque asks about the reprints of the 1878 issue of Panama. With the help of Myer's article in "The American Philatelist" he can distinguish papers, but he is worried about colour identification of the 50c, where Scott mentions "orange and buff" and Barriga has a question mark after "naranja". Gerard asks whether ther are fundamental differences in printing between the originals and the reprints, and whether, if the printing is of high quality, the stamp is an original.

804 Russell Haydon has in his possession an old German approval book containing official issues of the Seebeck period for Salvador. In listing the "flying saucer" SG type 050, it distinguishes between "local" and "New York" printings. Does anyone know of this distinction being made in any reliable article or handbook?

BIOGRAPHY - MANUEL JOSE ARCE (1787-1847)

played a leading role in the Salvadorean uprisings of 1811 and 1814, and as a consequence of his participation in the latter, was imprisoned until 1819. In 1823 he led the Salvadorean forces which attempted to prevent the annexation to Mexico, and after the victory of the Mexican army, he sought exile in the United States. Following the reestablishment of Central American Independence in July 1823, he became a member of the provisional executive triumvirate. In March 1825 he was elected President of the Central American Federation. Caught up in the political battles between Guatemalan Conservatives and Liberals, Arce was drawn over to the side of the Conservatives, and dissolved the Liberal dominated state Government in October 1826. The political fight spread to El Salvador, provoking an outbreak of hostilities between that state and the federal government in March 1827. Arce personally led the federal troops into the field, but he was unable to achieve a settlement and retired from the Presidency in February 1828. The victory of the Liberals led by Francisco Morazán forced Arce into exile in Mexico in 1829. His invasion of Guatemala, attempted in 1831, proved to be a dismal failure, and he was not permitted to return to his homeland until 1844. He died in poverty in 1847.

THE 1908 SURCHARGES by BRIAN MOORHOUSE

According to Guatemala II, the 1908 surcharges were authorised by decree dated 6th April 1908 and were reported to have been put on sale in the second half of June 1908. It also says favour cancels dated 15th May 1908 are known. The postcard below was written on 11th May and the franking includes 2 x 1c on 10c 1908 surcharges. The Guatemala cds is dated 16th May and the New Orleans cds is dated 25th May. The above must qualify as the earliest known usage of these stamps and obviously points to the May 15th date as being the actual date of issue!